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with Hydrocephalus and Hydrothorax

An Inquiry

Into the

Symptoms cause and Seat

of

Diabetes.

By

Robert Briggs, Virginia

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An Inquiry into the symptoms &c of Diabetes.

This is a disease in its commencement but seldom noticed by the patient labouring under it, and of course rarely falling under the observation of the medical practitioner untill it has reached a more advanced stage.

The symptoms which point out its existance are a craving appetite insatiable thirst, dry mouth, accompanied with a bitter or mawkish taste swelled gums, teeth as if on edge from acids, loose in their sockets, whitish tongue with red edges increased quantities of urine, which generally has a sweetish taste and resembles in appearance a solution of honey in water, with a slight greenish tinge. lassitude wasting of the flesh in a majority of cases costiveness but in some instances an obstinate laxity of the bowels; dry skin most frequently hot occasionally having a cold clay-like feel. flushing of the face, head ach, an intire loss of the venereal appetite, soreness and a slight degree of swelling about the glands penis in males; an uneasiness at the termination of the urethra in females; a sensation of weight at the seat of the stomach, and a pain in the region of the kidneys. slight delerium, generally confined to the night.

The seat and proximate cause of this disease have been matter of anxious inquiry and diligent search among Physicians in every age of medical science, from the time of Hippocrates to the present days, to enumerate the various hypothesis which has been formed by the several authors who have written on the subject would form a catalogue affording neither instruction nor amusement equal in value

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to the time which must necessarily be expended in its com-
-pilation.

The Author of this essay, after examining the seve-
-ral opinions which have fallen within his reach, has
been led irresistably to adopt the sentiments of Professor Rush:
ie, that diabetes has its origin in a diseased action of the
liver. with a view to the establishment of this doctrine the
following sheets are devoted.

The late celebrated Doctor Cullen[1] consider-
-ed this disease as arising from "some fault in the assimu-
-latory powers or in those employed in converting alimento-
-ry matter into the proper animal fluids"[2] among the abet-
-tors of this opinion we may also place Doctor Home[2].
this view of the subject however was only hinted at in a dis-
-tant manner, untill Doctor Rollo[3] ushered it into the world
reduced to a more definite form. but the greater number of
his reasons for believing diabetes a desease of the stomach
will support, with more energy, the opinion of its being a
disease of the liver. It has long been known, that in di-
-seases of the liver alkaline substances were serviceable;
we find jaundice frequently cured by soda, either alone
or combined with soap: the several preparations of Iron
have

1 Cullens first lines § 1512
2 Clinical Experiments page 318 N Seq
3 Rollo on diabetes page 436 - 2nd edit

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have also been used for the same purpose. Opium when the vessels of the liver act languidly produce great benifit in stimulating them to a more vigorous and healthy action. Doctor Pollo acknowledges a deficiency of bile evinced by lights coloured stools & as noticed by Doct Aspinwall[5].

Doct Cullen, altho advocating a different opinion, states facts going far to prove the doctrine here defended to be correct: "it frequently (says he) happens to men who for a long time before had been intemperate in drinking, that it happens to persons of a broken constitution or who as we frequently express it are in a cachectic state, that it follows intermittent fevers, & &c intemperance in the use of spirituous liquors very generally produce diseased action in the liver that a great number of the forms of disease included by Doct Cullen in his class Cachexia arise from disease of the liver is a fact I believe not to be denied and that a diseased liver succeeds intermittents more frequently than any other form of disease (an enlargement of the spleen perhaps excepted) as equally certain. Doct Darwin[6] suspects some connection of (what he conceived) the diseased organ with the liver in Mr Brundlys case. Doct Mead[7] considers diabetes as akin to jaundice and affirms that stea-

4 Zoonomia Vol 2 page 65
5 Philad^a med museum Vol 5 p 139
6 Zoonomia Vol 2 p 141
~~8 Observations &c p. 87~~
7 Treatise on poisons Chap 8

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steatomacious tumours are found in the liver as to the secretion of the bile this is bilious V.[8] this Opinion of Dr Mead is taken notice of by Professor Rush[9] It is asserted that the liver is frequently found in a sound state contrary to the observation of Doctor Mead this has arisen no doubt in many instances from want of attention for we find in the cases of dissection reported by Dr Duncan Senr and Doctr Rutherford[10] that altho the liver is stated to have been sound in the same report they informs us that the contents of the gall bladder differed from healthy bile. Professor Rushr has moreover proven to us that the liver may be greatly diseased and still exhibit no morbid marks, under the knife.

Mr William Scottr, Surgeon in the service of the East India company, cured both the patients which came under his care (labouring under diabetes) with mercury, after many other remedies had been tried in vain one of these relapsed who was afterwards restored to health by the use of the nitric Acid. the good effects of Nitric Acid in diseases of the liver are too well known to require any comment. - Doctr Rotherguill's[13] patient recovered by the use of a prescription of which mercury formed

8 Mead Mus Vol 7 page 87
9 Rees Cyclopa Article Diabetes
10 Philad Med. Mus Vo 2 # 219 - 229 -
11 Philad Med. Mus - 7 " 87
12 N. Y. Med repos 1 " 137
13 Mead. Oliver Vinquert 3

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some in fact — the number of instances stated by Mr Robert Watt in his cases &c shew the insufficiency of Doctr Rollo's plan and at the same time almost demonstrate these principles to be just by the signal success attending the free use of the lancet under the most unpromising circumstances. Doctor Rush has succeeded in four cases out of five by the last mentioned mode of treatment. the case related by Professor Barton, in his lectures, of a Gentn one of the officers of the bank, having been cured by confinement to vegetable diet, gives a death blow to the theory of Doctor Rollo, and effects much in establishing the Rushean doctrine.

Two instances of this disease have fallen under my own observation. these cases occured several years ago, at a time when Doctr Rush's theory of this disease had not fallen into my hands. they were treated agreeably to Doctr Rollo's plan. both of them were very greatly amended during the continuance of the animal diet, &c but the disease returned in a few months after resuming their former mode of life, a habit of which consisted in the liberal potation of spirituous liquors. one of these cases has terminated fatally. the subject of the other wearing gradually out at the last information. I have no hesitation in believing that both these men laboured under disease of the liver: they had long been in the habit of bowing in lowly devotion, before the throne of Bacchus, and one of them

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bore along the record of his practice in the florid gutta rosea of his face. in one of these patients, a symptom existed which as far, as I have been able to learn is not generally attendant on this disease: a wasting and obstinate diarrhoea this evidently arose from the same cause which produced the increased discharge of urine. a return of the diarrhoea was invariably preceded by an increased flow of urine and in proportion as the urinary discharge was augmented the disease of the bowels became aggravated. in this case so certainly did a variety of circumstances point to a diseased liver, that had I not been too much tied down by a particular theory, and fearing it might militate against the hitherto only known method of alleviation I should unquestionably have attempted the removal of this disease by the use of mercury, together with the accompanying remedies used for the cure of chronic Hepatites.

Finis.